



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

www.iowanaturestore.com

Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653
mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us

Feb. 15, 2005

1. Safe Hunting Year – by Joe Wilkinson
2. Two Areas Proposed for Preserve Status
3. Spring is a Great Time to Plant Trees
4. Ice Fishing Shelters Must be Removed by Feb. 20
5. Final Ice Fishing Report

SAFE HUNTING YEAR

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Iowa hunters played it safe in 2004. For the first time in 40 years of modern record keeping, the Department of Natural Resources recorded no firearm-related hunting deaths and a record low 17 injuries from hunting incidents.

Safety officials credit Iowa's long-running hunter education program and the recently arrived blazed orange requirement for upland game hunters as the primary reasons. "This has been a long time goal of the department," underscores Rod Slings, DNR recreation safety supervisor. "While one injury is too many; having a year with no fatalities is tremendous." A shooting death in December, next to a public hunting area in central Iowa was initially treated as a hunting incident. However, investigation concluded it was a suicide.

Slings sees the safe hunting year as a culmination of Iowa's volunteer-driven hunter education program. "We have 1,800 dedicated volunteers who teach 12,000 students or more each year. (That) is probably the number one reason for the decline," says Slings. "Compare (2004) to 1966, before hunter education became mandatory. We had 144 personal injuries and 19 fatalities."

A review of the 2004 incidents underscores Slings observation that even one injury is too many. Incidents resulted in a lifelong disability to 'just' property damage. In Johnson County, a stray deer slug went through the siding of a house south of Solon, across a room and into the family's entertainment center. Investigators tracked the slug's path back into a nearby field. The December 18 incident is still under investigation.

Two weeks earlier, in Jackson County, Jared Determan was left with an ominous scar, but no doubt feeling lucky to be alive. The 19-year-old had just shot and missed a deer while hunting with his group near Canton. Behind and above him, 15-year-old Lucas Petty stepped forward to shoot; slid on the hillside of a creek bed, causing his firearm to discharge. The slug tore across Determan's scalp, leaving a six-inch scar. Remarkably, Determan was released after treatment.

While eight of the reported incidents involved deer hunting, other seasons were not immune. On the day after Christmas, in Woodbury County, 41-year-old Tony Bohlke of LeMars suffered severe eye injuries when struck by over 40 pellets as another hunter in his party of six swung on a flying pheasant and fired in his direction. Pheasant hunting was tied to five incidents. Another two came during turkey hunting; two more were connected to rabbit hunters. One was unknown. The final count of hunting incidents is 19, including two of property damage. They were scattered over 14 Iowa counties.

Swinging on game; flushing gamebirds, for example, or running deer is the leading cause of accidents. That is one reason that safety officials applaud the just enacted 'blaze orange' law for upland game hunters. For years, firearm deer hunters have been required wear blaze orange over their upper bodies. In 2004, the Iowa Legislature approved and Governor Tom Vilsack signed into effect a law requiring upland game (pheasants, quail, rabbits, etc.) to wear a hat, gloves, vest or jacket which is at least half blaze orange.

More than just the increased visibility, though, Slings points to the record low count as an indication that hunters overall are paying attention. "We now see hunting incidents become news because they are so few," Slings says. "We know that hunters are making the proper choices out there, as to when and when not to pull the trigger."

As hunters hear of a hunting incident now, he hopes they will be realize the progress made. "Hunting is part of our heritage and an important tradition," Sling stresses. "(It) is a safe activity and is getting safer."

###

TWO AREAS PROPOSED FOR PRESERVE STATUS

The State Preserves Advisory Board to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is soliciting public comment on the proposed dedication of two new state preserves in Floyd and Greene counties.

Fossil and Prairie Park is a 315-acre public site near Rockford owned and managed by the Floyd County Conservation Board that features geologically significant fossils, historic brick and tile kilns, native prairie, and rare plant and animal species.

Eureka Woods is a 106-acre, privately owned area of steep wooded bluffs and bottomland forest along the North Raccoon River near Jefferson in Greene County. Brief descriptions and maps of the proposed preserves are viewable on the State Preserves page of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources website at <http://www.iowadnr.com/preserves/>

At its meeting on April 1, the Preserves Board is expected to decide whether to admit these proposed sites into the state preserve system. Public comments regarding these proposals can be sent to State Preserves Advisory Board, c/o John Pearson, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319-0034; the comment period is open until March 15, 2005. Land designated as a state preserve is intended to be preserved in perpetuity and is legally protected from disturbance by state law.

For more information, contact John Pearson at 515/281-3891 or John.Pearson@dnr.state.ia.us

###

SPRING IS A GREAT TIME TO PLANT TREES

More than 6 million trees and shrubs were planted in Iowa last year for conservation efforts on private and public lands. Again this year the Iowa State Forest Nursery and several private Iowa nurseries have good supplies of Iowa grown conservation tree and shrub seedlings available for spring planting.

“There are good supplies of white, red and bur oak, black walnut, silver maple and 39 other species of conifers, hardwood trees and shrubs available from the State Forest Nursery in Ames,” said John Walkowiak, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources forestry bureau.

These conservation trees and shrubs are bareroot seedlings from locally collected Iowa seed, and range in size from 8 to 24 inches. Prices are the same as last year and range from \$.25 for an 8 to 16-inch tall conifer such as Norway spruce, to \$.45 for a 17 to 24-inch tall hardwood tree or shrub such as the oaks. Plants are sold in lots of 100 and a minimum order of 500 plants is required.

“For those interested in planting a smaller area for wildlife habitat. The State Nursery offers three wildlife packets of 200 trees and shrubs for \$90 that is right for someone with one acre or less to plant, and a 20 tree and shrub song bird packet for \$20 this perfect for that odd corner in your backyard,” Walkowiak said.

Conservation seedlings or seedling packets from the State Forest Nursery by calling 1-800-865-2477 M-F 8-4:30 p.m. or online at www.iowadnr.com/forestry/. Credit card orders are accepted.

###

ICE FISHING SHELTERS MUST BE REMOVED BY FEB. 20

DES MOINES – The Feb. 20 deadline to remove permanent ice fishing shelters from state owned land and water is rapidly approaching and anglers are encouraged to not wait until the last minute to get them off the ice.

Failing to remove the permanent shelter is subject to a misdemeanor fine. If the shelter falls through the ice, the owner is responsible for removing it and subject to an additional littering fine.

###

IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of February 16, 2005

www.iowadnr.com

This is the **final** ice fishing report. Ice conditions are deteriorating on most water bodies in Iowa. The spring fishing report will begin in April.

Northwest

Walleye and Muskie season is closed on East Okoboji, West Okoboji and Spirit lakes. Some parts of northwest Iowa had significant rain over the weekend and ice conditions are variable. Extreme care should be taken if going on the ice.

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Anglers are catching yellow perch using on minnows fishing off the south boat ramp area. Crappie fishing is good at the North Grade and Templar.

West Lake Okoboji (Dickinson): Some yellow perch are being caught between Pocahontas and Eagle points on wax worms and teardrops. Anglers are catching a few bluegills at Emerson Bay and at the north end of the lake.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Yellow bass fishing is good in the late afternoon. Use jigging spoons and minnow heads. Most of the Town Bay area is open water from the aeration system and the recent rain.

Crawford Creek (Ida): Bluegill fishing is excellent for 7 to 8-inch fish on wax worms and teardrops.

Brushy Creek (Webster): A few nice walleyes and crappies were caught within the past week. Most of the fish were caught in 30 to 35 feet of water using a small jig and minnow. Some nice bluegills have been caught on the bottom in 10 feet of water.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Ice conditions are deteriorating rapidly with the warm weather and rain. Use caution and drill test holes to check ice thickness. Walleye fishing is good. Jigging spoons and minnows are both producing fish. Fish the sunrise or sunset times for the best success. Remember the 14-inch minimum length limit for walleyes. Yellow bass are biting. Small spoons and minnows are producing the best.

Silver Lake (Worth): Yellow perch fishing is fair around the jetty and the campground area using minnows. Sorting is required, but 7 to 9-inch fish are available.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Ice conditions are unsafe in the southern most counties in southwest Iowa due to the warm weather and last week's rain. It is advised to NOT venture out on any remaining ice. **Ice Conditions** in the northern areas (Boone, Polk, Jasper, Story, and Warren) are variable, but ice fishing is not recommended. If you must go out, be very cautious and drill plenty of test holes.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 to 19: The water temperature at Lock and Dam 16 (Muscatine) is 35 degrees and the river pool stage is 11.42. Water levels are expected to drop gradually over the next several days. Open water fishing continues to be fair for walleye and sauger on jigs tipped with minnows and worms (if available) in the tailwater areas below Dam 15 (Davenport), Dam 16 (Muscatine), Dam 17 (New Boston), Dam 18 (Burlington), and Dam 19 (Keokuk). Anglers are also catching a few channel catfish on shad guts.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): Unsafe ice conditions.

Lake Darling (Washington): Unsafe ice conditions.

Lake Geode (Henry): Unsafe ice conditions.

Lake Belva Deer (Keokuk): Unsafe ice conditions.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Unsafe ice conditions.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Unsafe ice conditions.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Unsafe ice conditions.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Unsafe ice conditions.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Bluegills and small crappies are fairly common biters on jig/wax worm combos and small jigging spoons. Those willing to search are also catching a few larger crappies. Deeper drop-offs and brush piles are producing best. The main ice is still good; **watch the outer edges for slushy spots.**

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): The water is very dirty and the current is strong. Fishing conditions are tough.

Smaller Lakes: Due to the warmth and rains, ice conditions are variable to poor, especially around the edges. **Fishing is not advised at this time.** For details on specific lakes, call your county conservation board for current conditions.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Ice conditions have deteriorated on the Mississippi River in northeast Iowa. The river has risen 4 feet in the last 10 days at Bellevue. The ice is very unstable and water levels are expected to rise another foot this week. Access to the backwater areas is very difficult for anglers—however, in the lake areas without any flowing current, sufficient ice remains. Be very cautious crossing any sloughs or side channels on the Mississippi River. Rising water and rain has opened many areas. NEVER venture onto ice if not sure or if ice looks suspicious. The tailwaters at Guttenberg (**Lock and Dam 10**) and Lynxville, Wis., (**Lock and Dam 9**) are open to tailwater walleye and sauger fishing. Parking at the Guttenberg tailwater is limited to a few parking places below the DNR office. Ice has retreated at Lynxville and the boat ramp is open for boat launching. Fishing at both locations has slowed some as rising turbid water has turned off the bite. In **Pool 10**, some crappies are being caught in Joyce Lake and Mud Hen Lake near Harpers Ferry. Crappies and bluegills are also being taken in Norwegian Lake, but action at Bussey Lake near Guttenberg is slow with a few bluegills, yellow perch and an occasional northern pike being caught. In **Pool 11**, Swift Slough near Guttenberg and Mud Lake near Dubuque are reporting some crappies and bluegills being caught. In nearly all cases, anglers are using teardrop type lures tipped with a wax worm. A few fish are being caught in Kehough (**Pool 12**); however, access is very limited/non-existent and anglers are encouraged to use extreme caution. Ice conditions have greatly deteriorated and All-Terrain Vehicles are going through the ice. For those finding good ice, bluegills and crappies are being caught in Brown's Lake (**Pool 13**).

Alice Wyth, Big Woods, Fisher, George Wyth, and South Prairie lakes (Black Hawk): Ice conditions are fair to poor. Use extreme caution when entering ice. Fishing at this time is not recommended.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

###